

of conversation this month in meetings with the Syrian opposition delegation and top U.S. officials."

The problem, U.S. counter-terrorism and intelligence officials tell *The Daily Beast*, is that there are just so many jihadists with Western passports traveling to fight in Syria that they worry some of them may slip back into the United States without being detected.

"The NSA does not have the ability to track thousands of bad guys—and on the human intelligence side, this is even more difficult," another senior U.S. intelligence official told *The Daily Beast*. "So we are worried that people are slipping through the cracks."

Olsen in his March testimony said there were thousands of foreign fighters in Syria and that hundreds of those fighters held Western passports.

"This raises our concern that radicalized individuals with extremist contacts and battlefield experience could return to their home countries to commit violence on their own initiative or participate in al Qaeda-directed plots aimed at Western targets outside of Syria," he said. Olsen also said that a group of "al Qaeda veterans" from Afghanistan and Pakistan have gone to Syria, making the prospect of recruiting new members for the organization even more likely.

Aaron Zelin, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy who closely tracks the flow of foreign fighters into Syria, said, "In the past when we've seen Americans go abroad to fight in foreign countries and a number of individuals have been trained to go back to attempt attacks on the homeland." The best example he said is Faisal al-Shahzad, the Pakistani American who traveled to Taliban training camps in Pakistan and then attempted to set off a bomb in Times Square in 2010. Al-Shahzad failed to properly detonate his bomb and was reported to the New York police by a Muslim-American street vendor.

"It's not just Americans who are going to Syria, but there are up to 3,000 European citizens from countries that have visa waivers with the United States who have also joined the jihad in Syria," Zelin said. "This is why so many Western counter-terrorism officials are so worried, it's much easier to get into our country with a Western passport."

Those Americans that have gone off to fight in Syria also do not fit the typical terrorist profile. Last May, the *Detroit Free Press* reported that Nicole Lynn Mansfield, a convert to Islam, was killed in fighting in Syria fighting Assad. In April of 2013, a federal court charged Eric Harroun, a former U.S. Army private, with firing a rocket-propelled grenade while fighting alongside al-Nusra, al Qaeda's official affiliate in Syria. If U.S. intelligence estimates are correct, these cases could be unfortunate harbingers of things to come.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, this weekend Americans will gather to remember all who have fought and perished so that we might live in freedom. Memorial Day is our chance to honor their extraordinary sacrifices.

Of course, Kentucky has long played a proud and vital role in the defense of our Nation. I am honored to represent so many Kentuckians in the Armed Forces, including those stationed at Fort Knox, Fort Campbell, the Blue Grass Army Depot, and members of the Reserves and Kentucky National Guard.

One of the reasons Memorial Day is so important to me is because it allows Americans to reflect and give thanks for all that we have—to recognize that none of it would have been possible without so many Americans we have never met putting everything on the line for us. That is why the men and women who protect us deserve our full support when they are deployed, when they are training, and when they return home. Most Americans certainly agree with that statement.

Yet as we have recently learned, that is not what is happening. So many Americans now turn on the evening news just to be sickened by the steady drip, drip from the Obama administration's growing veterans scandal. The denial of care to our veterans is a national disgrace and the scandal only seems to increase in scope by the day.

We first heard about 1 hospital in Phoenix, then we heard about 10 medical centers across the Nation, now there are at least 2 dozen VA facilities under investigation. It all leads to an obvious question: How widespread is this failure to treat our veterans?

We need answers from the President and his administration. The White House claims the President didn't even know about the latest scandal until hearing about it on the news, even though a top official testified he knew of inappropriate scheduling practices at VA health care clinics as far back as 2010. It sure raises a lot of questions.

It is a curious thing. President Obama, the most powerful man in the free world, always seems to be the last to know about what is going on in his own administration. From the Obama administration's IRS scandal to its ObamaCare Web site fiasco, just about every time, the President claims to be in the dark until the wrongdoing surfaces on its own—usually in the press. The pattern is incredibly worrying.

If it is true he learns so much through the press—if he knows that little about what is going on in his own administration—then I recommend he get reengaged. Right now. Right now. Because American Presidential leadership is needed today. This scandal appears to be a failure of huge magnitude, and the people we represent are demanding he rise to the challenge.

Our veterans are counting on him to work with both parties to get to the truth and to pursue solutions that can make things better—solutions such as the VA reform bill that passed the House yesterday with strong bipartisan support. That legislation, which I have cosponsored and which Senator RUBIO has been the leader on, would make it easier to remove high-level VA employ-

ees for performance failures. It is a smart idea. There is no reason for us not to pass it quickly right here in the Senate. The President should call for its passage right away too. That would be one positive step forward for him—a small one, but a positive one, even though, for some reason, the White House has been ambivalent about the bill.

Look, we all remember how engaged the President was when healthcare.gov flopped. He was very engaged. He didn't just send a staffer out to Phoenix; he didn't just give a secretary a stern talking to; he didn't say he wouldn't stand for it. He pulled out all the stops. He made it his No. 1 priority to get that Web site running, even if that is still not done. What I am saying is the President should put more effort into helping our veterans than his attempt to fix a Web site. Only he can work with us to get to the truth. Our veterans deserve it. They deserve answers. They deserve accountability, and they deserve solutions.

As we look ahead to Memorial Day, I hope the President will work constructively with us to give them just that—to prove how grateful we are to the brave men and women who protect us every single day.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

BARRON NOMINATION

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I rise today to speak in favor of the confirmation of David Barron to the First Circuit Court of Appeals.

As a Harvard Law professor, he has broad bipartisan support from those who know him best—his colleagues. Larry Tribe and Charles Fried—two professors at Harvard who could not be further apart politically—both agree—and this is the joint quote—"Barron is a brilliant lawyer who will make an excellent judge. What is clear to us is that Barron will decide cases based solely on the relevant sources of legal authority, including binding precedent, and that his political views would in no way distort his legal judgment."

This is the kind of unequivocal support we want for a judicial nominee, and David Barron is just the kind of judge we should confirm.

I stand alongside those of my colleagues who believe transparency is paramount and that we need a public debate on drone policy. Indeed, I support a robust debate on our entire drone policy, not simply the use of a drone to kill an American citizen who was plotting the annihilation of his fellow Americans.

Importantly, the White House just announced that it will release to the general public the key memo Professor Barron wrote, so all Americans will be able to take part in this debate.

But let us be clear: David Barron is not responsible for the administration's delay in releasing the memos he